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ber of the Board of Finance of the Centennial Exposition at Philadelphia, and he had most liberally served his native town of Woburn in performing the duties of many offices and in the support of its public schools.

Such are some of the facts in the life and activities of Mr. Cummings which made him worthy of fellowship in the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Besides contributing to the support of institutions and working zealously to make the teachings of science more widely known, he manifested a very unusual interest in the study of nature. He made himself very familiar with the various species of plants growing in the region of his large farm in Woburn, and he profited by every opportunity to become acquainted with the minerals, the rocks, and the physical features of the vicinity. He was a good example of that notable class of men who in the earlier days of science devoted as many hours to the study of nature as their secular duties would permit. In all the various fields of work with which he became associated he was appreciated for the readiness and correctness of his judgment, for the energy with which he labored in the causes he espoused, for his invariable adherence to the highest standard of integrity and of right doing, and for his strong individuality of character.

WM. H. NILES.

#### JOHN CODMAN ROPES.

JOHN CODMAN ROPES was born in St. Petersburg, Russia, April 28, 1836, and died at his house, 99 Mt. Vernon Street, Boston, early in the morning of October 28, 1899. He was elected a Fellow of the Academy in May, 1885. His father was William Ropes, a native of Salem, and his mother was Mary Anne Codman, daughter of Hon. John Codman. William Ropes was for some time engaged in business in St. Petersburg, but removed to London in 1837 and lived for some time at Islington, where a younger son, the late Dr. F. C. Ropes, was born.

After the return of the family to Boston John Ropes studied for a while at the Chauncy Hall School, but at about the age of fourteen he was obliged to leave school on account of a physical infirmity. Up to that time he had been perfectly well and his figure was erect and shapely. But at about that time a slight curvature of the spine became apparent, which increased rapidly until it became a noticeable malformation. This physical deformity did not embarrass the action of heart or lungs, and during his entire life his health was remarkably good. But nevertheless

the deformity was a very serious burden and prevented Ropes from engaging in activities which would have been most congenial to him. I might add that to those who loved him — and no one knew him who did not — this malformation was simply non-existent. In sitting and talking with him one never thought of him as different from other men.

After leaving the Chauncy Hall School, Ropes was for a while under the care of Dr. Buckminster Brown. He then resumed his studies under Professor Goodwin, who acted as his private tutor and fitted him for college. He was graduated at Harvard in 1857 and soon afterwards entered the Law School, where he received his LL.B. in 1861. While he was proficient in the work of the Law School, it is interesting to observe that in that early time he also took a deep interest in questions of philosophy and religion. He was always a man of profoundly religious nature, with all the strength and earnestness of Puritanism, but without its ascetic features. In the year of his graduating at the Law School he received the Bowdoin prize for an essay on "The Limits of Religious Thought," — a title which strongly suggests that his mind had been exercised by the famous book of Dean Mansel which we were all then reading. For a short time Ropes studied in the office of Peleg W. Chandler and George O. Shattuck. He was admitted to the bar November 28, 1861, and continued to practise law in Boston until the time of his death. In 1865 he formed a partnership with John Chipman Gray of the class of 1859; and thirteen years later W. C. Loring of the class of 1872 was added to the firm, which has since been known as Ropes, Gray and Loring. Ropes' professional work was almost entirely confined to the office. Possibly his physical difficulty may have had something to do with this. He had all the qualities which might have placed him in the very highest ranks as an advocate before the court. He had an almost infallible scent for the essential points in a case, he could disentangle the most complicated details, he could hunt for evidence with a kind of cosmic patience that took everything with the utmost deliberation but never let slip the minutest detail, and he could marshal his arguments with a logical power that was equalled only by the artistic beauty of statement. To hear him argue any point was a genuine delight both to one's reason and to one's æsthetic sense. With all these rare endowments as an advocate, Ropes confined himself principally to business that could be done in the office, especially to the care and management of trust estates. At the time of his death there were more than a hundred trust estates, large and small, in his hands. He had long ago established his reputation as a safe person for taking care of money. He

always showed sound judgment in making investments, and I suspect that one secret of his success was that minute and systematic attention to detail which characterized everything that he did.

The high qualities which might have made him a great advocate found a rich field for their employment in work done outside of office hours; and it is after all by that literary work that he will be longest and most widely known. The recollection of his professional work will of course pass away or be confined to very few persons after the present generation. But his contributions to history have excellences which are likely to secure for them a very long life. His published writings relate almost entirely to military history, in which his two chief topics were the career of Napoleon and the Civil War in America. I think there was in Ropes' nature an infusion of the true soldier. Had he been physically competent for service, he would probably have taken part in the Civil War, like his younger brother Henry, whose brief life was ended at Gettysburg. I fancy that the incapacity for service was a real grief to John Ropes, but it never seemed to disturb his serenity of spirit. If he could not be useful in one way he could in another. If he could not follow in the footsteps of Alexander, he might at least in those of Arrian. The thought of writing a history of the Civil War was one which grew with him into a settled purpose, and very admirable was the sort of preparation which he made for it. It was natural that the subjects uppermost in his mind should come up for discussion in the pleasant evening hours at the club. Gradually there grew up a habit of holding meetings at his house, meetings in which veterans of whatever rank could compare their experiences and discuss mooted questions. Ropes strongly encouraged the preservation of every scrap of experience that could be put upon record, and thus grew up the habit of preparing historical papers to be read and discussed at these informal meetings. In this way Ropes became the founder of a most valuable institution, — the Military Historical Society of Massachusetts. For several years this body held its meetings at Ropes' house, where the speaker of the evening was apt to dine before the meeting and where the sessions were sure to end with a social glass and abounding good-fellowship. The publications of this Society, though few in number, are of great value. In recent years it has found a permanent habitation in one of the rooms of the Cadet Armory where Ropes, some time ago, placed the larger part of his valuable historical library.

One of the first literary results of these studies was an elaborate examination of the Virginia Campaign of General Pope in 1862, a summary

of which was furnished by Ropes in his volume entitled "The Army under Pope," being one of the volumes of Scribner's series on the Civil War. Among other things it may be said of this book that it completely exonerates General Fitz John Porter from the charges brought against him after the second battle of Bull Run and upon which he was so unjustly and cruelly condemned. I have been told that Ropes' weighty presentation of the case exerted no small influence upon the final verdict which declared General Porter innocent and went as far as possible toward repairing the grievous wrong that had been done. If no other result had come from founding the Military Historical Society, this alone would have more than justified its existence.

But Ropes' *magnum opus*, "The Story of the Civil War," was unfortunately never completed. It would have filled four volumes, and death removed the author soon after the publication of the second. The loss is one that can never be made good. Other writers of course may go over the period which Ropes failed to cover, but nobody can complete his book, for it is a case in which the writer's individual characteristics and personal experience are the all-important features. We have heard much in recent years of the advantages of the co-operative method in writing history, whereby a hundred experts may take each a small fragment of the ground to be covered. The merits of such a method are not denied, but it has one great defect: it gives us Hamlet with the Prince of Denmark left out. In an historical narrative nothing can make up for the personality of the narrator. A hundred experts on the Civil War would not fill Ropes' place for the simple reason that their hundred individual experiences cannot be combined in the same stream of consciousness. Ropes had gathered experience from every quarter; he had not only read pretty much everything worth reading on his subject, he had not only delved with endless patience in the original documents, but he had obtained through social intercourse with soldiers now passed away a truly enormous fund of information, a great part of which has surely perished with him. I remember that during the last two or three years the thought sometimes occurred to him that he might not live to finish his book. He told me one day that he only lacked eight years of being three score and ten, and that eight years were all too short a period for finishing the two volumes that remained to be done; he must therefore "scorn delight and live laborious days." He was always extremely fond of society; no man more keenly enjoyed a dinner-party or an evening at the club, and I can testify that sometimes after club hours were over we used to enjoy prolonging our friendly chat quite into the morning hours;

but in these latter days Ropes became much more chary of his time and subjected himself to a kind of discipline in order that his work might be finished.

In another direction and in dealing with a more limited theme, he achieved a finished piece of work. He had always entertained a warm admiration for the First Napoleon. It was natural that such an acute military critic should admire such transcendent military genius. But Ropes carried his admiration to an extent with which not all his friends found it easy to sympathize. In his little book entitled "The First Napoleon" Ropes appears as the great Corsican's advocate, and his case is presented with consummate skill. It has all the more weight because the author is far too skilful to weaken his case by over statement or by any too conspicuous warmth of enthusiasm. It is a masterly piece of writing, although in its philosophic grasp of the man and the period it is surely far inferior to the book published about the same time by the late Sir John Seeley.

It was in relation to the Waterloo Campaign that Ropes produced the completely finished work already alluded to. No battle of the nineteenth century has called for so much discussion as Waterloo; and most of the discussion has centred about the question, "Why did Napoleon lose the battle?" The books on this subject are legion, and they present us with an English view of the situation and a Prussian view, and ever so many French views, according to the political and personal predilections of the writers. Usually we find some particular antecedent selected as explaining the mighty result, while other antecedents receive inadequate attention or are passed over. One writer is impressed with the inefficiency of Grouchy, another one traces the catastrophe to the aimless wanderings of Erlon's corps on the sixteenth of June, and so on. But in Ropes' monograph what chiefly impresses us is the fact that he weighs every circumstance with the greatest care and puts real mental effort into the work of estimating the precise share which each circumstance took in the general mass of causation. In the first place the quality of the French army is duly considered and compared with the quality of the allied forces. Then such facts as the Emperor having Soult for Chief of Staff, an unaccustomed position for that able marshal, his feeling it necessary to leave at Paris the invincible Davoust, and other like circumstances, receive due attention. The mysterious movements of Erlon, which prevented his being of any use either to Ney at Quatre Bras or to Napoleon at Ligny, are more acutely analyzed than in any other book. Then the consequences of the very incomplete defeat of Blücher on the

sixteenth are carefully considered. Then Napoleon's great and unusual blunder in assuming an eastward retreat for the Prussians and acting upon the assumption without verifying it, is properly characterized. The share wrought by the muddy roads and the rains is not forgotten, nor the physical weaknesses which hampered the great general and allowed him now and then to be caught napping for a moment; the masterly position taken by Wellington; the effects of the topography; the extent to which the Emperor's attention was diverted early in the afternoon in the direction of Planchenoit, — not one of these points is forgotten or slurred over. It is this minute quantitative consideration of details that impresses upon Ropes' historical writings their truly scientific character, and no theme could have been better calculated to exhibit it in its perfection than the campaign of Waterloo. One cannot read the book carefully without feeling that for once in the world something has been done so exhaustively that it will not need to be done again. It would seem almost impossible for the most fertile mind to offer a suggestion of anything actual, probable, or possible about Waterloo that our author has not already brought forward and considered. Those who write such books are few, and to study them is a great and profitable stimulus. As this monograph on Waterloo related to a subject already well understood in Europe, it immediately gave Ropes a high reputation in European circles, and I believe he is regarded by experts as one of the soundest military critics since the days of Jomini.

JOHN FISKE.

#### JOHN LOWELL

JOHN LOWELL, the fourth of that name in direct descent from the first minister of Newburyport, who died in 1767, was born in Boston on the 18th of October, 1824. He was elected, in October, 1877, a Fellow of this Academy, of which his great-grandfather had been one of the original incorporators in 1780, and both his father and grandfather Fellows.

At the time of his birth his father was living on the lower (southerly) corner of what are now Bedford and Chauncy streets; but at that time, between Bedford and Summer streets, at the points where Chauncy Street now turns off, there was on Summer Street a place called Chauncy Place, running about two-thirds of the way through, and then closed by a brick wall with two openings for foot passengers, but none for vehicles, and turning up from Bedford Street a similar place called Bedford Place, on the upper side of which and next to the wall stood the house of Judge Charles Jackson, having a large garden and pear